

Teachers Resource Guide

Samuel Collier Transcript

Diary Index/Introduction

Hello. I'm Samuel Collier, a boy about your age, living in London when plans were made for a settlement in Virginia. I was one of the first 104 settlers who arrived in Virginia in 1607. Because I was able to read and write, I kept a diary, or journal, of what I saw. Here are some of my adventures in the New World and my life at Jamestown.

August 1606 London, England

What am I to do? Father is gone, I'm living in one of the largest cities in the world, and I can't find a job. There is talk of a new adventure, though. I'm thinking of joining the Virginia Company of London which is organizing a journey to Virginia to start a new colony. Perhaps they can use me.

November 1606

Success! Today I encountered Captain John Smith. Fortunate am I that I can read and write for he can make use of me as a page, or secretary, on the journey to Virginia to start a colony. We are to sail in December.

April 26, 1607 Virginia

About 4:00 this morning I was awakened by the cry of the watch-Land! Virginia! Four and a half months at sea in these cramped quarters have caused much quarreling among the men and it seems like we have been at sea forever. Now we have finally arrived! We built a small boat called a shallop to explore the Chesapeake Bay. I can already see the white sandy beach and tall pines. What a welcome sight! The air is mild and the river beyond the bay looks broader than any I have ever seen in England. We named this river the James, in honor of our King James 1.

May 13, 1607 Jamestown

After exploring up and down the river, we found a place 30 miles from the bay to settle. From what we have seen so far, Virginia is nearly a paradise! I have also seen many squirrels, rabbits, and wild turkeys. It is indeed a land of plenty!

June 1607

We've been cutting down trees during the past weeks to clear the land and build our fort. The fort is shaped like a triangle with high towers called bulwarks at each corner where we will mount our cannons from the ship. There has been much work to do-finish the fort, building our shelter, planting food, and exploring our new home.

September 1607

These past months have been most hot and humid. Men are dying daily from cruel diseases and hunger. We still don't have the skills to hunt, catch, or grow enough food. So we are forced to eat the wormy food left from our voyage. The water here is bad, too. Half our number are

dead-over 50 souls. We all would have died if the Powhatan hadn't brought us bread, corn, fish, and meat in great plenty. What miseries. How I long for the comforts of home in England.

May 13, 1608

Jamestowne is one year old today.

March/April 1609

Captain Smith has taken me with him on two of his trips to visit Indian villages along the James River. During the last trip, Captain Smith ordered me to spend some time in the village with one of the local werowances-that's what they call their chiefs. While I was there, I tried to learn as much as I could, including a few words such as moccasins and tomahawk. I also saw a beast that looked like a badger who lives in the trees like squirrels. He is named raccoon. Another was as big as a cat, had a tail like a rat, and carried her young in a bag under her belly. It was called an opossum. What an adventure!

June 1610

I guess I'm one of the lucky ones, if that is what you call those of us who survived the cruel winter known as the "Starving Time". So many have died of hunger and disease, including some of my friends.

June 1614

For the last seven years, we've tried to find ways to make a living. We recently had victory in one attempt-growing tobacco. John Rolfe experimented to see if tobacco grown in the West Indies might also grow here. And it does! Now, the tobacco we grow in Virginia is shipped to England in exchange for English goods that we need. Tobacco should make some of us successful.

September 1620

Jamestown has changed much since those terrible early years. Our city has spread out along the river, and other communities have started nearby. I now have my own land and house. I'm married, too! Growing tobacco takes lots of work. Several of my workers are indentured servants. Many English men and women are starting their new lives in Virginia as indentured servants. Last year in 1619, about 20 Africans arrived in Virginia and became servants, too. As far as I know, they were the first Africans to come to Virginia. Another important event took place at Jamestown in 1619. We elected representatives to meet as the House of Burgesses. It gives us representative government just like England. I'm glad, too, because I plan to spend the rest of my life in Virginia, my new home.

Items that would identify Samuel Collier:

Spoon/bowl-empty symbolizes the starving time

Wooden ball-and-cup child's toy from the time

Moccasin -Powhatan word he learned meaning shoes

Quill pen/inkwell-he was literate and able to write, hired as secretary for the Virginia journey